



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

October 13, 2004

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
Chairman
Sen. Committee on Governmental Affairs
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Ranking Member
Sen. Committee on Governmental Affairs
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
Sen. Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James M. Jeffords
Ranking Member
Sen. Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Collins, Senator Inhofe, Senator Lieberman, and Senator Jeffords:

Four hurricanes ravaged the State of Florida in six weeks' time. Congress now has appropriated \$8.5 billion to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide assistance to those affected by the hurricanes. I have been impressed by the coordinated disaster response of local, state and federal agencies, but concerns are now surfacing about how FEMA is allocating relief dollars.

News reports indicate that to date hurricane-ravaged counties in the Treasure Coast, which sustained direct hits from two hurricanes, have received considerably less FEMA assistance than have counties where damage from the storms was not as severe. These reports are troubling to many of my constituents who are still waiting for FEMA to come to their aid. In one published report, a FEMA official, in response to questioning about tracking FEMA dollars, is quoted as explaining this apparent discrepancy by saying, "I don't know that we track where this is going." That is an astonishing pronouncement. In this technologically advanced age, I cannot believe that FEMA is not capable of tracking where their federal assistance dollars are going.

Now, that we have appropriated even more money to FEMA to help disaster victims, it is important that the agency account for how that money is spent. I strongly support all the funding that Congress provided, but this money has to be spent wisely. Vigorous congressional oversight is necessary to make sure that no one in need is left behind. As the passage of S.Res.445 has left jurisdiction over FEMA and the Stafford Act in question, I direct my request to both committees and ask the appropriate panel to review the allocation of disaster funds by FEMA to ensure that all deserving parties receive what they need.

I look forward to working with you to make sure FEMA is properly allocating these funds. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,